



Department of Justice

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Southern District of Indiana**

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ON TAX DAY, FOUR INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE EMPLOYEES CONVICTED OF UNEMPLOYMENT FRAUD

Indianapolis defendants received more than \$30,000 in benefits while employed by IRS

PRESS RELEASE

INDIANAPOLIS – Joseph H. Hogsett, the United States Attorney, announced today the conviction of four former employees of the Internal Revenue Service's call center in Indianapolis. The defendants were found to have engaged in a scheme to defraud Hoosier taxpayers by falsely claiming unemployment benefits even as they were employed by the IRS during tax season.

"As thousands of Hoosiers file their tax returns today, they deserve to do so knowing that those hard-earned tax dollars are being safeguarded," Hogsett said. "These are not victimless crimes – any fraud or waste of taxpayer resources is a crime against every taxpayer in this state."

This case comes as Hogsett has prioritized the investigation and prosecution of fraud, waste and abuse on the part of public officials and those in positions of trust. As part of this effort, the U.S. Attorney's Office created its first Public Integrity Working Group to assist in the investigation and prosecution of cases involving public corruption and white collar crimes.

According to court documents, all four defendants were employed between 2008 and 2010 as IRS call center employees during tax season. At the conclusion of tax season, the employees would be furloughed. During these furlough periods, the employees would apply for and receive unemployment benefits through a jointly-operated program between the federal government and the State of Indiana.

In applying for these benefits, the defendants all falsely certified that they were not employed for each week they received benefits. This process is completed online. In the course of a regular audit, federal investigators discovered that the defendants were continuing to file for weekly unemployment benefits even after their furlough period had ended and they had begun working at the seasonal call center once again.

All four defendants have been convicted for their roles in the scheme:

- Sheila Hill, age 34 – loss amount: \$10,189.00
- Je-Taun Finch, age 38 – loss amount: \$5,076.00
- Elizabeth Amos, age 45 – loss amount: \$3,650.00
- Lorita Hiter, age 38 – loss amount: \$3,095.00

As a result of their convictions, the four employees have been ordered to repay taxpayers the full amount of loss. An additional defendant, Andrea Jackson, age 29, is alleged to have participated in the scheme at a cost to taxpayers of \$8,693.00. Jackson will appear in court this afternoon and is expected to enter a plea of guilty and be sentenced.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Nicholas E. Surmacz, who prosecuted the cases for the government, the investigation into the fraud scheme is still ongoing. This case was the result of a collaborative investigation involving the Department of Treasury – Treasury Inspector General, along with the Indiana Department of Workforce Development.

An Information or Indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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